

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 SS-15 NSC-10 CIAE-00 PM-07 INR-10 L-03

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USDOCOSOUTH

AMEMBASSY ROME

C O N F I D E N T I A L USNATO 3742

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, NATO, IT

SUBJECT: REDUCTION OF U.S. NAVAL FORCES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

1. ACTING UNDER INSTRUCTIONS, ITALIAN CHARGE (BETTINI) CALLED ON AMBASSADOR RUMSFELD ON AUGUST 8 TO EXPRESS GOI "OFFICIAL CONCERN" OVER PROPOSED REDUCTION OF SIXTH FLEET ASW UNITS IN COURSE US NAVY MODERNIZATION PROGRAM. BETTINI MADE POINTS COVERED IN AIDE MEMOIRE (TEXT FOLLOWS) AND SAID ITALIAN EMBASSY WASHINGTON WILL SOON MAKE PARALLEL APPROACH TO DEPARTMENT OF STATE.

2. TEXT OF ITALIAN AIDE MEMOIRE:

QUOTE:

THE ITALIAN MILITARY AUTHORITIES HAVE CAREFULLY EXAMINED THE REDUCTION OF ANTISUBMARINE UNITS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN ANNOUNCED BY THE US GOVERNMENT WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE MODERNIZATION PROGRAM OF US NAVAL FORCES.

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2.- THE VALIDITY OF THE REASONS PUT FORWARD IN SUPPORT OF THE ACTION TAKEN ARE RECOGNIZED; HOWEVER THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS ARE FORMULATED IN THE HOPE THAT IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO KEEP THE RANGE OF THE US MEASURES WITHIN ACCEPTABLE LIMITS, HAVING IN MIND

THE INTERESTS OF NATO IN GENERAL AND IN PARTICULAR OF ITALY:

A) IT IS AFFIRMED THAT, WHEN THE MODERNIZATION PROGRAM IS COMPLETED, AN OVERALL IMPROVEMENT IN THE QUALITY OF THE US FORCES IN MEDITERRANEAN WILL BE ACHIEVED. IT HAS TO BE NOTED THAT THIS ACHIEVEMENT WILL REQUIRE YEARS, WHILST THE ANNOUNCED RETIRING OF NAVAL FORCES FROM ACTIVE SERVICE WILL TAKE PLACE IMMEDIATELY;

B) THE IMPROVEMENTS ALREADY PUT INTO EFFECT IN THE ANTI-SUBMARINE FIELD AND THOSE TO BE ADOPTED IN THE NEAR FUTURE WERE AIMING TO REMOVING DEFICIENCIES ALREADY EXISTING IN THE PAST AND NOT TO COUNTERBALANCING THE CURRENT WITHDRAWAL OF UNITS: THEREFORE IT SEEMS THAT, AFTER THE AFORESAID WITHDRAWAL, THE OVERALL ANTISUBMARINE CAPABILITY WILL BE REDUCED IN COMPARISON TO THE PRESENT ONE;

C) IT IS THE FIRST REDUCTION OF US FORCES IN EUROPE; IT COMES UNEXPECTED AND TOUCHES THE FIELD (NAVY) EVERYBODY DEEMED NOT SUBJECT TO REDUCTIONS;

D) IT IS A UNILATERAL REDUCTION, NOT BALANCED BY A SIMILAR ACTION OF THE SOVIET UNION, AND IS PUT INTO EFFECT OUT OF THE MBFR FRAMEWORK WHICH, ALSO IN VIEW OF THE MEDITERRANEAN SITUATION, HAD INTENTIONALLY LEFT OUT NAVAL FORCES;

E) THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF THE DECISION WILL TOUCH MANY VERY SENSITIVE FIELDS AND, IN PARTICULAR:

- THE MILITARY ONE, BECAUSE THE CURRENT BALANCE OF NAVAL FORCES IS MODIFIED. IN THIS REGARD, IT IS WELL KNOWN THE PROGRESSIVE DETERIORATION OF THE ALLIED FORCES SITUATION VERSUS THE STRONG AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT, IN QUANTITY AND QUALITY, OF THE SOVIET FORCES;

- THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ONE: BECAUSE IT MAY BE INTERPRETED AS THE FIRST CLEAR SYMPTOM OF THE US INTENTION OF STARTING A LARGE OPERATION OF DISENGAGEMENT IN EUROPE.

3.- THE ITALIAN AUTHORITIES HOPE THAT THE AFORESAID CONSIDERATIONS DEALING SPECIFICALLY WITH THE MEDITERRANEAN MIGHT BE DULY EXAMINED BY THE NATO COMPETENT ORGANS, BOTH POLITICAL AND MILITARY. UNQUOTE.

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3. IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTION, BETTINI SAID SENIOR ITALIAN NAVAL AUTHORITIES FEEL DEEP CONCERN AT PROSPECTIVE U.S. NAVAL REDUCTION IN MEDITERRANEAN, THAT MOD SHARES THAT CONCERN, AND THAT THIS WAS SOURCE OF HIS INSTRUCTIONS. HE EXPLAINED THAT GOI WISHES DISCUSS ITS MISGIVINGS BOTH IN NATO MILITARY COMMITTEE AND IN DUE COURSE IN DPC. HE FURTHER STATED THAT, ALTHOUGH MILITARY COMMITTEE HAD STUDIED AND WAS ON POINT OF ACCEPTING CHANGES IN COMPOSITION OF U.S. NAVY PRESENCE IN ATLANTIC, NATO MILITARY AUTHORITIES HAD NOT EXAMINED PROSPECTIVE REDUCTIONS IN MEDITERRANEAN; AND ROME BELIEVED THAT BOTH MILITARY COMMITTEE AND DPC SHOULD DO PRECISELY THAT.

4. WHILE DISOWNING EXPERTISE IN SUCH MATTERS, I EXPLAINED TO

BETTINI IN GENERAL TERMS THE NATURE, THE PURPOSE AND THE FUTURE OF OUR NAVY'S MODERNIZATION PROGRAM. THOSE ALLIED PROFESSIONAL MILITARY MEN WHO HAD HEARD ADMIRAL ZUMWALT'S PRESENTATION ON THIS PROGRAM HAD JUDGED IT TO BE SOUND, ACCEPTABLE V NATO, AND DESERVING OF THEIR SUPPORT. I SAID THAT I BELIEVED THAT THDOU.S. MILITARY AND THE ITALIAN MILITARY SHOULD GET TOGETHER AND TALK THIS MATTER OUT BILATERALLY AND IN PROFESSIONAL TERMS. THEY MIGHT HOLD SUCH QUIET PROFESSIONAL TALKS IN BRUSSELS OR IN ROME OR IN WASHINGTON. I TOOK STRONG EXCEPTION TO HIS REFERENCE TO MBFR IN THIS CONTEXT (SEE PARA 2(D) OF AIDE MEMOIRE, ABOVE). AND I URGED HIM TO RECOMMEND TO HIS AUTHORITIES THAT THE GOI REFRAIN FROM RAISING THIS ISSUE IN ANY NATO ORGAN UNTIL A FULL AND FRANK BILATERAL DISCUSSION HAD OCCURRED. I PARTICULARLY WARNED AGAINST PUTTING THIS MATTER ON THE DPC AGENDA BECAUSE OF THE POLITICAL EFFECT WHICH IT MIGHT HAVE. BETTINI SAID HE UNDERSTOOD MY REASONING AND AGREED TO REPORT MY RECOMMENDATIONS TO ROME.

5. COMMENT: THE USNATO DEFENSE ADVISOR WILL PROMPTLY FOLLOW UP ON THIS MATTER WITH THE ITALIAN DELEGATION TO NATO; AND I AM REQUESTING GENERAL MILTON TO TAKE PARALLEL SUPPORTING ACTION WITH HIS OPPOSITE ON THE MILITARY COMMITTEE.

6. ACTION REQUESTED: I RECOMMEND A) THAT WASHINGTON INITIATE HIGH LEVEL MILITARY-TO-MILITARY TALKS WITH THE ITALIANS TO ASSUAGE AND REASURE THE ITALIAN MOD, B) THAT IT FIX A SINGLE LOCUS FOR SUCH TALKS, AND C) THAT USNATO BE KEPT ADVISED OF THEIR PROGRESS.

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7. FINAL COMMENT: IF THE ITALIANS REMAIN "CONCERNED" ABOUT THE NAVAL SITUATION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AND INJECT THIS EXTRANEIOUS ISSUE INTO ONE OR MORE OF THE NATO FORUMS, SOME ALLIES COULD FIND THIS THEME A USEFUL D BSTRACTION FROM THE MAIN ISSUES OF THE DAY: MBFR AND BURDENSARING.

8. PLEASE ADVISE.

RUMSFELD

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